

# Soldiers

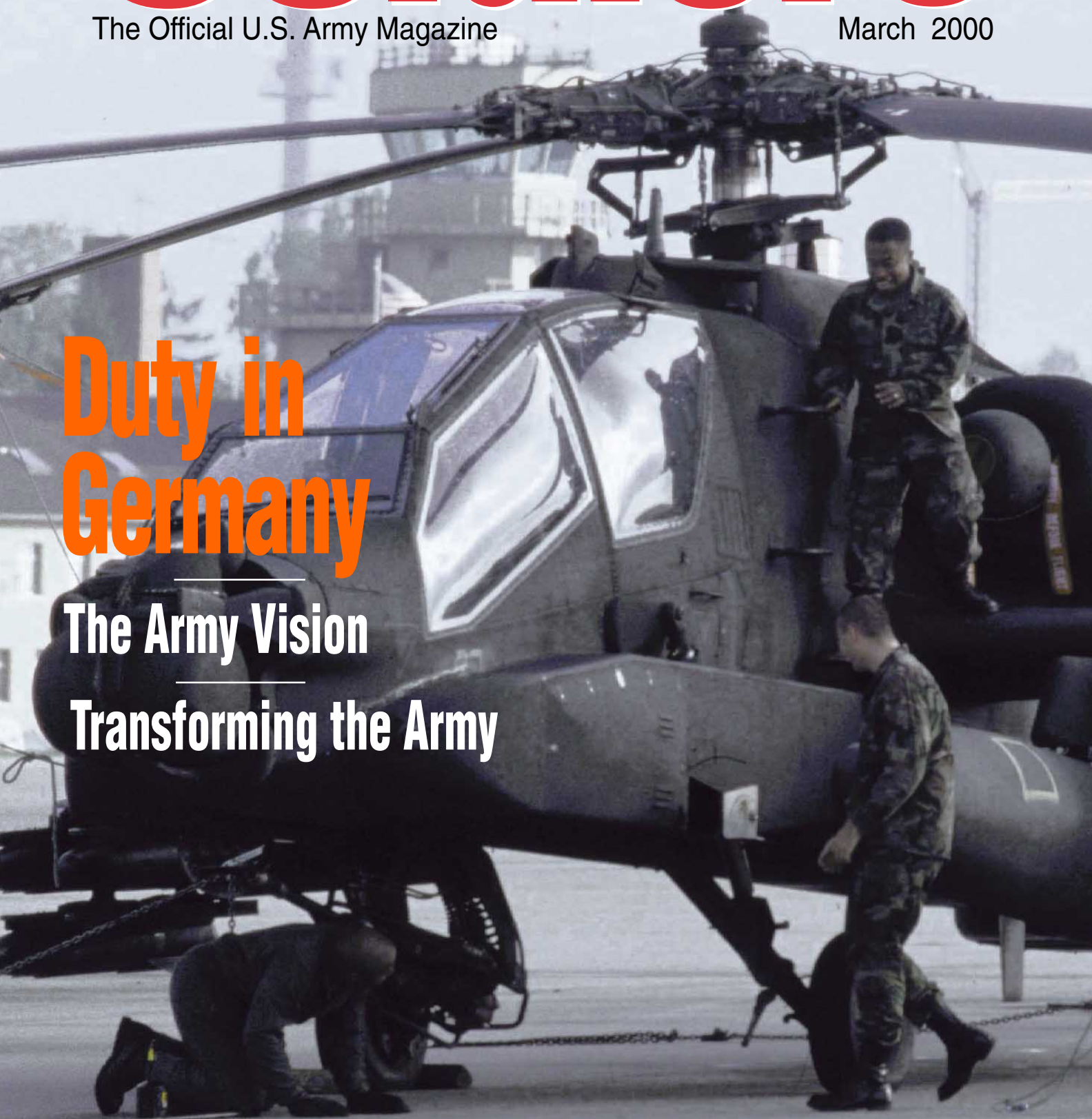
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**Duty in  
Germany**

**The Army Vision**

**Transforming the Army**





When not deployed, many USAREUR-based soldiers come home to well-maintained barracks and comfortable rooms like this one in Vilseck.



*“Taking classes or volunteering brings spouses together with other adults experiencing similar circumstances ... .”*

## Supporting Soldiers and Families

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Chaplain (CPT) Robert Nay, a 1st Inf. Div. chaplain in Schweinfurt, performed services for the soldiers who died. “Two of them were married,” he said. “I had to go with the senior officer in the battalion to tell the wives and children.”

Tragic as the deaths were, Reese said it drew the spouses of deployed soldiers closer.

Again ACS services helped. An ACS-provided computer program allowed soldiers and their spouses to see and talk to each other via video-gram.

A community homepage kept families abreast of what was happening in Kosovo, “so rear-detachment commanders heard about events, including the fatalities, before CNN

did,” Reese said. Casualty working groups immediately formed to assist the bereaved families.

Simultaneously, ACS classes, programs and handouts addressed virtually every concern soldiers or families might have had, Eels said.

“Our goal is to empower family members or single soldiers to take charge of their lives. We do that by encouraging spouses to be productive while a loved one is deployed,” said Eels. ACS offers free computer and language-skills training, and provides volunteer opportunities.

“Taking classes or volunteering brings spouses together with other adults experiencing similar circumstances, and teaches them new skills to make them more marketable,” Eels said.

“Wives get depressed when they realize their husbands aren’t coming home for dinner, night after night,” said FAP chief Rachel Henry. When this happens, she said, some of them lose all motivation to care for themselves, their children or their homes.

“We’re not punitive,” said Henry. “We’re just here to provide resources to those who need help.” That help can come in the form of anger-management classes, family therapy, or a daytime trip for shopping or sightseeing. □

# A Choice

Story and Photos by Heike Hasenauer

LTC Stan Sims, commander of the 235th Base Support Battalion in Ansbach, Germany, tells his mother that he’s the mayor of the five military communities under his jurisdiction, including four kasernes in Ansbach and Stork Barracks in nearby Illesheim.

## Ansbach

“I want the Ansbach community to be the community of choice in U.S.



## Duty in Germany





**The Ansbach area is home to three of USAREUR's four AH-64 Apache attack helicopter battalions.**

deploying with my unit," he said. "All I have to worry about is providing the best possible quality of life to soldiers, family members, Department of the Army civilians and retirees in the Ansbach area."

Before the military drawdown in Europe, "we didn't have BSBs," Sims said. "The senior person in a unit was in charge of a community. When he or she deployed, someone else was appointed to take up the slack. That person wasn't always qualified or equipped to handle the job."

Ansbach and Illesheim together form the largest Army aviation community in Europe, Sims said. Seventy-five percent of the Army's aviation assets in Europe fall under the 235th.

"Three of the four AH-64 Apache battalions stationed in Europe — plus aviation maintenance, air traffic control and air medevac units — are in my community," Sims said. They are part of the 1st Infantry Division's 4th Aviation Brigade.

Supporting some 8,300 people, "we're similar in size to the Bamberg military community," said Sims, "but it is in only one location. We're spread over five kasernes.

"This will be one of the last communities in Europe to ever close down," Sims guessed. "We have airfields in Illesheim and Katterbach, and airfields are expensive to build."

The former home of the 1st Armored Division's 17,000 people, the military community is today half the size yet boasts plentiful housing and great schools. Ansbach Elementary School was rated the best Department of Defense school in Europe in 1999.

Housing is so plentiful in the community that there are virtually no waiting lists, Sims said. "In fact, we give quarters' keys to sponsors so they

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# Community

Army, Europe. It's an area that boasts a lot of small-town, home-type communities, and a lot of little successes," he said. Ansbach has been a consistent top finisher in the Army Communities of Excellence program for the last five years.

"The Army trained me for 20 years to be a tactical intelligence officer, not a base operations commander. There's no such MOS," said Sims, who's served in every type of tactical unit

and trained at all the familiar training areas.

"But what better person to do this job than someone who knows soldiers," he said. "I can take care of families the way I want my family to be taken care of.

"I've worked 20-hour days with those tactical units," Sims added. "I've spent time in Saudi Arabia, Haiti and Bosnia. But this is a tough job.

"I don't have to worry about

## A Choice Community

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can take new families right from the airport to their homes.”

Engineers just completed renovating the 10th building in a major housing renovation project. And all of the BSB’s buildings, including barracks, are to be renovated by 2010.

The work includes the largest such project in USAREUR, Sims said — a 225-person, seven-wing building in Katterbach that was built by the German air force in the 1930s.

Additionally, a teen center recently opened in Katterbach for the first time, in response to teens’ requests.

And while all BSBs have small local training areas that allow soldiers to conduct small-unit training, “our training facilities, which include a MOUT village, are more robust because the 1st Armd. Div. was here,” Sims said. “We’re adding a fully automated M-16 range in 2001, adjacent to the combat-pistol qualification range we just completed.”

Construction of a forward-area arming and refueling point that allows helicopter crews and ground support personnel to practice “hot” fueling operations has already begun.

Sims said soldiers from southern Europe are expected to take advantage of the training area when improvements are completed some time in 2004. The site will allow them to perform common tasks training and weapon qualification and preclude some of the deployments to Hohenfels.

“Recently, too, USAREUR picked our BSB as the firefighter training center,” Sims said. All 16 base operation organizations train their firefighters at the 235th BSB’s facility, which includes a mock-up helicopter with burners so fire emergency services can train in putting out aircraft fires.

## Illesheim

Even the small Illesheim community of 2,300, spread over about three miles, has schools, libraries and churches, Sims said. Its health clinic operates five days a week.



**Children in Vilseck’s Child Development Center — part of USAREUR’s modern and well-staffed CDC system — await their after-recess snack.**

Nancy Castleman, a civilian nurse at the clinic, has lived in Germany for 20 years, and in Illesheim since 1996. “My dad was a soldier,” she said. “And I was a soldier, from 1987 to 1992.

“Illesheim has its good and not-so-good points,” she said. “There’s little crime here, as compared to the larger communities. But because it’s a little place, people experience some inconvenience. It’s hard to complete errands

during the week, for example, because things close at 4:30. We have a little PX and commissary.”

On the other hand, “because we’re so small, the waiting time for services, like medical care, is brief,” Castleman said.

Whatever services Illesheim lacks can be found only a short drive away in Würzburg or Ansbach.

“The Army provides transportation between kasernes, too,” said



## Duty in Germany





**The Illesheim-based 6th Battalion, 52nd Air Defense Artillery, is one of two Patriot missile battalions stationed in Germany.**

Castleman, whose 13-year-old son is bused to school in Ansbach, some 30 minutes away.

MAJ Denise Costa and her husband, CPT Steve Costa, live in government housing in Illesheim, "a beautiful, four-bedroom duplex," Denise said. He commutes to Würzburg, where he's head nurse at the medical surgical ward of Würzburg Army Hospital. She, a nurse at the Illesheim health clinic, takes the kids to daycare.

The Costas, who had recently arrived in Germany from Fort Rucker, Ala., were just beginning to explore their new home.

"There's an active corps of volunteers here," said 235th BSB fitness coordinator Sharon Morejon, who serves the Katterbach and Illesheim communities. "Parents coach soccer for the kids, run the haunted house for Halloween and plan community events to celebrate special occasions year-round.

"We work to incorporate fitness into people's lives, to get them out and

involved," said Morejon, a part-time aerobics instructor. "We have volksmarching and ski clubs, among other offerings."

Morejon's husband, SGT Lorenzo Morejon, is assigned to the 58th Avn. Regt. in Katterbach.

"Within six months of arriving here he deployed to Bosnia. That's when I started teaching aerobics," Sharon said. "Most people I've met have a good, supportive outlook about deployments. And spouses who get involved in the community are OK."

"I brief every soldier who comes into the 235th BSB," Sims said. "I tell them my staff and I work to provide them and their families a mini-America in Germany, with as many of the services they're accustomed to in the states as possible.

"By the same token, I tell them: 'You are in Europe at Uncle Sam's expense. You're 25 minutes from the medieval city of Rothenburg, to which people come from around the world. You can drive to Austria in the morning and come back in time for dinner. Enjoy the country where you're fortunate enough to be assigned.'" □



**Off-duty soldiers share good conversation and some liquid refreshment in a gasthaus in an Ansbach suburb.**

## Aviation Brigade

**B**EFORE Christmas, CPT Thomas Styner and other 1st Aviation Regiment pilots and crew chiefs trained in Germany's alpine region.

They were preparing to deploy to Kosovo. Styner's AH-64-equipped Company B, 1st Battalion, 1st Avn., was preparing to replace the 2nd Bn.'s Co. A.

Earlier, Co. B completed a gunnery exercise at the Grafenwöhr training area, Styner said.

Because most of their flying is done at night, crews trained with night-vision goggles so they wouldn't have to depend solely on forward-looking infrared devices if the weather in Kosovo got really nasty.

"My soldiers have been working 12- to 14-hour days, because we could have been sent to Kosovo at any time," said battalion commander LTC David Abramowitz, current commander of the aviation task force in Kosovo, Task Force Gunfighter.

"In June and July 1999 we were practicing gunnery when we were pulled out to go to Kosovo. Then, military officials determined that they needed a lift capability more than an attack capability," said 1st Bn. 1SG Felipe Mendez. In late 1997, the 1st Bn. had deployed to Bosnia.

In November, Abramowitz's crews arrived in Kosovo, assuming control of eight Apaches; 10 UH-60 Black Hawks from the 2nd Bn., 1st Avn. Regt., in Ansbach; six medevac helicopters from Landstuhl, Germany; eight OH-58D Kiowa Warriors from the 4th Cavalry Regt. in Schweinfurt; six Apaches from the United Arab Emirates and four Ukrainian Mi-17 Hips, he said.

Today, Abramowitz's crews are getting some of their best training ever, he said. "They fly four times as much here as in Germany, because in Kosovo they're not pulled from their jobs to complete other details.

"In Kosovo, we're not focused on killing things. Our job is reconnaissance," Abramowitz said. — Heike Hasenauer